

Over 7,000 miles away from their Singapore campus, Yale-NUS students Ritika Biswas and Kaushik Swaminathan hopped into a car with a stranger and headed east. Guided by curiosity in lieu of highway signs, the trio spent the next nine hours off-roading along the craggy coastline of southern Iceland. From the back seat, Biswas and Swaminathan basked in the endless summer sun and watched as their vehicle curved past a Nordic medley of glaciers, puffins, and hot springs.

Finally, the car slowed to a stop in the scenic fishing village of Höfn as tires met gravel. At long last, they had arrived at mystery's helm: the supposed crash site of a World War I RAF plane. After thirty minutes of surveying the shoreline, the trio spotted a glimpse of a wing. There, lying in the sand, was the elusive wreckage, logo still visible and interior teeming with metal vestiges. Climbing aboard the aircraft, the group disappeared into the depths of the decrepit plane and retrieved some celebratory beers from their backpacks. Twenty-four hours ago, they had been complete strangers. Now, here they were, toasting to the future inside a warped relic of years past. But they weren't the only ones coming together, and this wasn't only happening here. And it was all thanks to Summer Playbook.

From Beijing to Barcelona and Phuket to Paris, Summer Playbook is ensuring that "campus community doesn't end at term time." Launched in 2015 by Harvard undergraduate Luke Heine, the web app assists Ivy League students in meeting up around the globe over summer vacation. Dinner in Dublin? Coffee in Cairo? Explorations in Edinburgh? Each May, Summer Playbook provides students with a map of possibilities, marking each user's summer location and displaying how he or she would like to interact with others. Last summer, Summer Playbook connected 3,611 students in 4,600 locations. Today, Summer Playbook is continuing to expand its reach; this summer, it will be live for Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Brown, Cornell, Dartmouth, University of Pennsylvania, Yale-NUS, Stanford, MIT, Oxford, Cambridge, NYU, Columbia, and Wellesley. From his dorm room in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard junior Luke Heine remains on a steadfast mission to make the world a smaller place: student by student, city by city, summer by summer.

A dogged digital pioneer with a vision of impacting the world, Heine fits right in on Harvard's Cambridge campus. Beyond his ambitions – and his tortoise shell glasses – however, he stands out from the stereotypical Ivy League student. This is evident from the moment he opens his mouth, because Heine doesn't just speak; rather, he buzzes with energy – blue eyes gleaming with enthusiasm, a smile constantly tugging at his lips. An hour-long chat with Heine provides more energy than a double-shot espresso – and far more surprises.

"Monday was the Boston Marathon," Heine tells me. "Sunday, I didn't know I was running the Boston Marathon." Heine's life has always been punctuated with sudden bursts of inspiration. When he was sixteen years old, he decided to organize the largest charity Ultimate Frisbee invitational in the nation, right in his own backyard in rural Minnesota. "We had DJs," Heine recalls, "we had professionally designed shirts, we had watermelon for all of the kids..." He smiles. "And we donated thousands of dollars to at-risk youth." Returning from his memory, Heine connects the experience back to his life today. "It really taught me that you can be sixteen years old, have an idea, and be a fool trying to make something happen, but at the end of the day, sometimes what people deem strange or odd is really a good idea."

It wouldn't take long for this message to resonate in Heine's life once more. A year later, as a high school senior, Heine travelled to Singapore to tour Yale-NUS as a newly admitted prospective student. It was his first time out of the country, and his few days abroad would impact him for years to come. "[My time in Singapore] showed me how big the world is," says Heine, "and how necessary travel is in terms of rethinking who you are in it." Though he didn't choose to attend Yale-NUS, Heine brought this lesson with him to Harvard, studying abroad in Siena, Italy on a Rockefeller Grant the summer after his freshman year. Among Italy's rolling countryside and cobblestone streets, Heine encountered the inspiration for his next big idea. Stumbling by chance upon a handful of Yale students in Siena, Heine was disheartened to discover that the group would be returning to the U.S. the very next day. "I was like, 'Shit, what a problem!'" says Heine. In that moment, he swore to himself: *never again*. Now, two years later, Heine repeats these words to me with a smile. "Never again."

Upon returning to Harvard after his time in Italy, Heine began to brainstorm his newest innovation: a web app that would connect students from different Ivy League universities in cities all over the world, ensuring that his letdown in Siena would not be replicated in future summers.

Though many students question the similarity in names between Summer Playbook and Facebook – another Harvard-bred innovation – Heine never intended to follow in Mark Zuckerberg's footsteps. In fact, the site's name derives from a popular on-campus saying: "What's the play?" which means, "What are you doing?" Says Heine, "I combined that with the thought of a coach's playbook, and how you have all these different options for how you spend the next moment in the game. And *that's* where Summer Playbook came from." The differences between Playbook and Facebook, however, do not end here.

Whereas Zuckerberg crafted a service that would ultimately be worth upwards of \$245 billion, Heine is adamant in his decision not to monetize Playbook. "We're very clear that we're not a corporation, we're not a business, we're not trying to profit maximize this," says Heine. "None of us make a dime off of Playbook." This truth, however, is a rude awakening for the throngs of engineers on campus who dream of following Zuckerberg's footsteps to Silicon Valley. Says Heine of the campus climate in regards to innovation, "There's this idea of billion or bust." For the first time in our conversation, he appears a bit deflated. "For example," he continues, "I was talking to one of my friends and they said, 'My freshman year, I thought of something like Playbook, too. But I didn't do it because I didn't know how we'd make money off of it.'" Heine sighs. As a sociology major and computer science minor whose focus is "where people find meaning in their work," he simply cannot wrap his head around this pervasive campus-wide mentality.

Oddly enough, however, although Summer Playbook is a completely free service, Heine still experienced difficulty in the site's early marketing phases. "Marketing was straight up *hustle*." He laughs. "And it's this weird paradigm, where you hustle to give people something free that will benefit them." Now, though, with a summer's worth of testimonials to back Heine's service up, Playbook no longer struggles to attract a user base. With thousands of Playbookers registered for Summer 2016 in locations as booming as London and as obscure as Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, Playbook is ready to string together hundreds of stories across the globe.

As Summer Playbook continues to grow, however, some students can't help but voice concerns about user safety. Though wildly popular, similar sites like Airbnb and CouchSurfing have suffered criticism in recent years in light of customer horror stories. Today, in fact, a quick Google search for CouchSurfing conjures up articles with shady titles like "CouchSurfing or SexSurfing?" When it comes to Summer Playbook, what's to ensure the safety of the student who hops into a stranger's car in Iceland? On paper, this scenario sounds like the potential opening of the latest college-aged horror movie – who's to say that it wouldn't take a turn for the worse in real life?

The first step in ensuring user safety, says Heine, is using industry standard user encryption and filing a digital millennium and takedown clause. Playbook's most important safety feature, however, is a privacy policy and user compliance agreement very similar to the one employed in CouchSurfing. Says Heine, "We're not vetting every person on Playbook, so it's really like, 'Hey, we can bring together this community, but it's up to your best judgment regarding what you want to do with this person.'" Critically, stresses Heine, Playbook is not just about hosting – something that allows for greater breadth of user interaction. Amidst the uncertainty of the digital age, this also grants Playbookers a much-needed sense of agency, as they are the ones choosing how to interact with fellow users. Users *can* sip beers with strangers inside an abandoned World War I plane, but they could just as easily do so in a bar or pub.

Another concern about Playbook is that the platform might foster a sense of elitism, given that it predominantly serves the Ivy League. Conscious of this worry, Heine is currently at work to expand Summer Playbook to more schools each summer. The process, however, will remain incremental, as he carefully scours the globe for new additions. How are universities selected for Playbook? "A lot of the time," says Heine, "it comes down to a school's geographic composition of students. For example, the Ivy League, Yale-NUS, Oxford, and Stanford are some of the most international schools in the world. It's really looking at who has the funding and means so that a lot of the students are traveling over the summer." All of the aforementioned schools have top-notch financial aid programs and regularly fund hundreds of students' summer travels. Says Heine, "I think about where the low-hanging fruit is: what schools can we make the largest impact for, with a large range of socioeconomic backgrounds and cultures and things like that? For now, those are the low-hanging fruits."

Though Heine may spend hours hunched over the keyboard of his laptop, the focus of Playbook will always be the *people*. Heine laughs. "The exciting thing about Playbook is not *Playbook*." In our digital age notorious for texting over talking and "lulz" in lieu of laughter, Playbook is unique in its mission to transfer interaction *off*-screen.

Upon returning home last summer from his position as eBay's youngest product manager, Heine sat down and penned letters to 500 Summer Playbook users, personally thanking them for believing in his service. From a desk in rural Cloquet, Minnesota, Heine's words travelled north, south, east, and west, some for tens of miles and some for thousands – forming one giant network of thanks. "The letters were so hard to write," says Heine. He winces jokingly. "My hand

got *so* sore.” And yet, he cannot help but smile at the memory of his massive, real-life web.